DDI-3545-74

6 December 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: SAFE Briefing for Dr. Anthony Oettinger

1. On 6 December 1974, Dr. Anthony Oettinger, Harvard University, formerly the manager for Harvard's computers and once a member of the PFIAB KNOX Panel, was briefed in some detail on Project SAFE.

2. Subsequent to the briefing, at a lunchtime discussion with [redacted] [redacted] and me, Dr. Oettinger made the following points: SAFE is a high-risk operation because it involves the assembly of large quantities of hardware and complex functions in a manner that, to his knowledge, has not been successfully attempted elsewhere. He suggested that the top Agency management should clearly recognize that SAFE poses a state-of-the-art challenge. SAFE also represents a considerable risk in that a goodly amount of "front end" money may be spent before it is possible to determine that SAFE will be as great a success as has been initially advertised. The area of the risk, again, is in providing the inter-related assembly of complex machinery necessary to provide the reliability, variety of functions and support to the number of users explicit in SAFE.

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3. On the other hand, Dr. Oettinger was almost poetic in his praise for the efforts by the SAFE project team to understand the needs of the customers and the functions which would have to be provided in order to support those needs. His comments on the SAFE overview committee and its proposed membership was that they can provide "pontifical" comments, as he has done, but they cannot help us in building the system nor in lowering the risks.

4. Dr. Oettinger's attitude has reversed itself 180 degrees since his KNOX Panel days when he complained that the Agency was not taking advantage of the power of modern technology to facilitate and improve the manner in which we

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do our work. He is in favor of proceeding with SAFE but only with clear recognition that parts of it may not pan out precisely as described and that there is a risk, undefined, that the whole thing may fail simply because the state-of-the-art is not yet up to the demands that are being built into the design for SAFE.

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